

Message Text

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ACTION EA-12

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FM AMEMBASSY BANGKOK
INFO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 3302
AMCONSUL HONG KONG
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMEMBASSY VIENTIANE
CINCPAC HONOLULU
DIA WASHDC

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 1 OF 2 BANGKOK 11342

FOLLOWING MESSAGE SENT ACTION AMEMBASSY BANGKOK DATED
APRIL 12 REPEATED FOR YOUR INFO:

C O N F I D E N T I A L UDORN 0092

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: TH LA MOPS PINS
SUBJECT: INSURGENT ACTIVITY IN BURIRAM PROVINCE

REF: UDORN 0042

1. FOLLOWING APPEARANCE OF ARTICLE IN NEWS DAILY
BANGKOK WORLD APRIL 4 REPORTING ABDUCTION RAIDS BY COMMUNIST
INSURGENTS IN LAHANSAI DISTRICT, BURIRAM PROVINCE,
CONREP TRAVELLED TO AREA WHERE HE DISCUSSED SITUATION
WITH LAHANSAI DUEPUTY DISTRICT POLICE CHIEF APRIL 6.

2. SOURCE TOLD CONREP THAT INSUREGENTS CONDUCTED TWO
SEPARATE ABDUCTION OPERATIONS. FIRST OCCURRED MARCH 26
AND WAS DIRECTED AGAINST THREE VILLAGES LOCATED NINE
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KILOMETERS SOUTHWEST OF DISTRICT SEAT, IN VICINITY OF
COORDINATES TA6483 AND TA6583. SOURCE STATED THAT,
ACCORDING TO A VILLAGER WHO WAS INDUCED TO ACCOMPANY
INSURGENTS BUT LATER ESCAPED, INSURGENTS ENTERED VILLAGES
AT NIGHT TO WARN INHABITANTS THAT RTA UNITS PLANNED TO
LAUNCH LARGE-SCALE OPERATIONS IN THEIR AREA VERY SOON.
INSURGENTS SAID THAT THEY WOULD GUIDE PEOPLE TO SAFE

PLACES TO SPARE THEM INVOLVEMENT IN FIGHTING. TOTAL OF ABOUT 200 INHABITANTS FROM THREE VILLAGES FELL FOR INSURGENT RUSE, ABANDONING THEIR HOMES THAT SAME NIGHT AND FOLLOWING INSURGENTS INTO BUSH.

3. SOURCE REPORTS ESCAPED VILLAGERS AS STATING THAT INSURGENTS TOOK VILLAGERS ACROSS BORDER INTO CAMBODIA TO THAI INSURGENT MEDICAL SCHOOL NUMBER 610, LOCATED IN VICINITY OF COORDINATES TA8766. ESCAPED VILLAGERS CLAIMED THAT NO KHMER ROUGE WERE INVOLVED IN OPERATION.

4. OUR POLICE SOURCE STATED THAT INSURGENTS CARRIED OUT A SECOND ABDUCTION RAID IN NONG KRATUM VILLAGE, LOCATED IN VICINITY OF COORDINATES TA6978 ABOUT TEN KILOMETERS SOUTH FROM DISTRICT TOWN. ON THIS OCCASION INSURGENTS KIDNAPPED 32 VILLAGERS, APPARENTLY BY FORCIBLE MEANS, AND SET FIRE TO VILLAGE SCHOOL HOUSE.

5. POLICE SOURCE NOTED FURTHER THAT IN ADDITION TO ABDUCTIONS, AN ESTIMATED 600-800 VILLAGERS ABANDONED THEIR HOMES AS RESULT OF INSURGENT OPERATIONS AGAINST THESE FOUR VILLAGES. MAJORITY OF THESE PEOPLE HAVE GONE TO LIVE WITH RELATIVES OR FRIENDS IN OTHER VILLAGES, WHILE PERHAPS A FOURTH HAVE SOUGHT TEMPORARY REFUGE AT DISTRICT SEAT UNTIL SECURITY SITUATION PERMITS THEM TO RETURN TO THEIR HOMES.

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6. POLICE SOURCE CONCLUDED INTERVIEW BY VOICING HIS CONCERN OVER REPORTS THAT INSURGENTS MAY LAUNCH STRIKE AGAINST LAHANSAI DISTRICT OFFICE IN NEAR FUTURE. CONREP OBSERVED CONSTRUCTION OF NEW BUNKERS UNDERWAY IN DISTRICT POLICE COMPOUND AS HE DEPARTED.

7. COMMENT: LATEST SERIES OF ABDUCTION RAIDS IN LAHANSAI DISTRICT, TOGETHER WITH LARGE-SCALE INSURGENT ASSAULT ON A BPP OUTPOST AND A WORLD BANK-SUPPORTED SELF-HELP SETTLEMENT IN NEIGHBORING BAN KRAT DISTRICT, RESULTING IN 42 CASUALTIES (INCLUDING 22 KILLED) AS REPORTED IN BANGKOK PRESS APRIL 10 AND 11, ARE EXAMPLES OF AGGRESSIVE MILITARY CAMPAIGNS THAT THAI COMMUNIST INSURGENTS, WITH SOME SUPPORT FROM KHMER COMMUNIST ELEMENTS, ARE WAGING DURING 1977-78 DRY SEASON IN REMOTE AREAS OF BURIRAM, SURIN, SISAKET AND UBON PROVINCES BORDERING ON CAMBODIA. TO DATE INSURGENT MILITARY OPERATIONS HAVE RESULTED IN KIDNAPPING OF APPROXIMATELY ONE THOUSAND VILLAGERS, DISPLACED THREE TO FIVE THOUSAND MORE FROM THEIR HOMES AND INFLICTED SEVERAL SCORE KIA AND WIA ON RTG SECURITY FORCES. (NOTE: SOME OF ABDUCTED AND DISPLACED VILLAGERS

HAVE LATER SUCCEEDED IN RETURNING TO THEIR HOMES.)

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8. HIGH LEVEL OF INSURGENT MILITARY ACTIVITY ALONG NORTHEAST'S BORDER WITH CAMBODIA HAS MADE AREA REGION'S INSURGENT HOT SPOT THUS FAR THIS DRY SEASON. THIS SEEMS TO CONTRAST WITH PATTERN OF INSURGENT OPERATIONS DURING PAST SEVERAL DRY SEASONS WHEN FOCUS OF THEIR MILITARY OPERATIONS WAS IN SUCH PROVINCES AS LOEI, UDORN, SAKHON NAKHON AND NAKHON PHANOM. SO FAR THIS DRY YEAR, INSURGENT ARMED ATTACKS IN THESE PROVINCES APPEAR TO BE AT A LOW TO MODERATE LEVEL. SOME RTG OFFICIALS HAVE BEEN QUICK TO CLAIM CREDIT FOR THIS DECLINE IN ACTIVITY, ATTRIBUTING IT TO SUCCESSFUL ANTI-INSURGENCY PROGRAMS. WHILE GIVING DUE CREDIT TO SOME RECENT IMPROVEMENTS TO RTG ANTI-INSURGENCY PERFORMANCE, WE BELIEVE THAT SUCH OFFICIALS GREATLY OVERSTATE THEIR CASE.

9. THERE IS CONSIDERABLE SPECULATION AMONG OBSERVERS OF NORTHEAST INSURGENCY REGARDING REASONS BEHIND UPSURGE IN INSURGENT MILITARY ACTIVITIES ALONG CAMBODIA BORDER.
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WE SUGGEST THAT IT HAS A KOT TO DUE WITH AGGRESSIVE SUPPORT PROVIDED INSURGENTS BY KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY. THIS SUPPORT INCLUDES TRAINING, ARMS AND PERMISSION TO CONDUCT CROSS BORDER RAIDS FROM STAGING AREAS IN CAMBODIA THAT ARE RELATIVELY IMMUNE FROM EFFECTIVE RTG RETALIATION. FURTHER, THERE IS EVIDENCE INDICATING THAT KHMER COMMUNIST ELEMENTS OCCASIONALLY ACCOMPANY THAI INSURGENTS ON COMBINED ARMED OPERATIONS. FACT THAT BOTH CPT AND KHMER COMMUNIST PARTY HAVE STRONG LINKS TO CHINESE COMMUNIST PARTY MAY HELP TO EXPLAIN CLOSE COOPERATION THAT SEEMS TO EXIST BETWEEN THEM ALONG BORDER AT PRESENT TIME.

10. CIVIL AND POLICE OFFICIALS IN BORDER DISTRICTS RECENTLY HAVE EXPRESSED THEIR CONCERN TO US OVER EXPANDED INSURGENT OPERATIONS (SEE REFTEL). IN A LATER INTERVIEW WITH BPP REGION THREE COMMANDER MARCH 9, HE TOLD CONSUL THAT HE WAS BEING SORELY PRESSED TO MEET HIS RESPONSIBILITY FOR BORDER SECURITY WITH CAMBODIA. HE COMPLAINED STRONGLY THAT HE LACKED MANPOWER AND EQUIPMENT TO RESPOND EFFECTIVELY TO STEPPED UP INSURGENT MILITARY OPERATIONS.

11. HOWEVER, G-2 AT SECOND ARMY FORWARD HEADQUARTERS, SAKHON NAKHON, TOOK A CALMER VIEW OF SITUATION DURING CONVERSATION WITH CONSUL MARCH 15. HE AGREED THAT MOST OF NEW ACTIVITY ALONG CAMBODIA BORDER WAS WORK OF TPLA (THAI PEOPLE'S LIBERATION ARMY) AND ACKNOWLEDGED THAT AREA HAD TAKEN ON INCREASED PRIORITY FOR 2ND RTA. HOWEVER, HE CITED RECENT DISPATCH OF REINFORCEMENTS FROM 23RD RCT AND THIRD DIVISION TO TASK FORCE ELEMENTS OPERATING IN SURIN AND BURIRAM AND EXPRESSED FULL CONFIDENCE THAT THEY WOULD KEEP INSURGENTS IN CHECK.

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12. IT WILL BE INTERESTING TO OBSERVE WHETHER INSURGENTS CONTINUE WITH THEIR MILITARY CAMPAIGN ALONG CAMBODIAN BORDER FOR REMAINDER OF THIS DRY SEASON AND NEXT YEAR OR REVERT INSTEAD TO THEIR FORMER EMPHASIS ON POLITICAL ACTIVITIES. THEIR CURRENT OBJECTIVE APPEARS TO BE TO ESTABLISH STRONG BASES OF OPERATION, LIKE THEY HAVE ALREADY DEVELOPED IN LAHANSAI DISTRICT, BURIRAM, IN PLACES SUCH AS KAP CHEUN SUBDISTRICT, SURIN, KHUN HAN DISTRICT, SISAKET, AND NAM YEUN DISTRICT, UBON. IF THEY ARE SUCCESSFUL IN ACHIEVING THIS AMBITIOUS OBJECTIVE STRAIN ON RTG BORDER SECURITY FORCES WOULD INCREASE APPRECIABLY. FINNEY UNQUOTE

WHITEHOUSE

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